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SUBJECT: IRAQ EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, 7 SEPT
2007

Classified By: Baghdad PRT Team Leader Andrew Passen for reasons 1.4 (b
,d).

11. (C) Summary: The Iraq Executive Steering Committee (IESC) observed the six-month anniversary of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon with a performance review of the six supporting committees of the IESC. The Joint Planning Subcommittee of the IESC presented a report that made recommendations for reforming the IESC in light of identified strengths and weaknesses assessed over the past six months. Each committee chair will return next week to present their own assessment of their committee's activities. Delays in the rebuilding of the Sarafiya Bridge were also discussed. End summary.

Baghdad faces a 'new kind of warfare'

12. (C) General Abud, Commander of the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC), opened the meeting by stating that the current Baghdad Security Plan, Operation Fardh al-Qanoon (FaQ), or "Rule of Law", began with the underlying premise that for any counterinsurgency strategy to be successful, the military operations must be supported by efforts in the political, economic, cultural and psychological spheres and must be combined with efforts to improve basic services for citizens. He highlighted the importance of this session, during which they would engage in a frank assessment of how well these efforts were coordinated to support the military mission of securing Baghdad. He placed the struggle for Baghdad in the historical context of warfare and counterinsurgency.

Successes and failures of the supporting committees

13. (C) Ali al-Yassari, Deputy to the National Security Advisor (NSA), presented the findings of the subcommittee tasked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the six supporting committees of the IESC. He cited examples of notable successes of the IESC committees; 21 out of 42 schools closed prior to FaQ had been re-opened, the successful delivery rate of food rations improved to better than 60%, and nearly 3,000 families displaced by violence in Baghdad returned to their original homes. A number of banks, mosques and markets that were closed due to violence have been re-opened due to the efforts of the IESC committees.

14. (C) Al-Yassari noted that several hospitals and fuel stations in the city have not yet been re-opened, and a number of government buildings in Baghdad remain abandoned. Al-Yassari cited these examples as IESC failures that need to be rectified.

Room for improvement in the supporting committees

15. (C) Al-Yassari identified specific strengths and weaknesses of each of the supporting committees that his subcommittee identified; several examples of notable weaknesses are provided here:

- a. POLITICAL-- The Political Committee did not bring in any input to the IESC from the Council of Representatives or any other foreign embassies.
- b. ECONOMIC-- The Economic Committee was slow to identify and allocate funds for the Mutanabi Street reconstruction.
- c. SERVICES-- The Services Committee was slow to react to shortages of drinking water for Baghdad residents.
- d. MEDIA-- The Media Committee still permits many of the successes of FaQ to go unreported in the media. Baghdad citizens remain unaware of many FaQ achievements.
- e. POPULAR MOBILIZATION-- The subcommittee's report made little mention of the Popular Mobilization committee; assistance provided to returning IDPs was noted as a success of the committee.
- f. SECURITY-- The BOC and the Baghdad Provincial Council have made slow progress on improving coordination.

A greater role for Baghdad's provincial leadership?

16. (C) Al-Yassari recommended restructuring the six supporting committees and changing their leadership; in several cases he suggested putting Baghdad provincial leaders

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in those key assignments. Al-Yassari's proposed changes included:

- a. The Political Committee should be led by Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, and CoR member Hashem al-Hassani would serve as deputy. (Vice President Adel Abd al-Mehdi is the current titular head of the committee; Dr. Hashem, as his deputy, has recently been acting as its chairman.)
- b. The Economic Committee should be led by the Minister of Finance, Bayan Jabr. (Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih is the current chairman, but his office has largely taken over responsibility for both the Services and the Economic Committees due to the resignation of Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Salaam Zobai.)
- c. The Services Committee should be led by the Mayor of Baghdad City, Saber al-Esawi. (Current chairman Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Salaam Zobai's role in the government has been tenuous since his announced resignation. His office remains engaged in Services Committee work, but he no longer provides personal leadership. His office works with the office of Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih on Services Committee issues.)
- d. The Media Committee should be led by the Head of the National Media Center, Ali Hadi, the Prime Minister's Media Adviser. (Mr. Yassin Majeed is currently the chairman)
- e. The Popular Mobilization Committee should be led by the Governor of Baghdad, Hussein al-Tahan. (Dr. Ahmed Chalabi is its current chairman.)

17. (C) Al-Yassari made several recommendations to widen the IESC to include other important leaders. He suggested that the IESC should involve more Baghdad Provincial Council members, should bring in several principal religious leaders, and should allow for the contributions of neighboring countries.

¶8. (C) Several IESC members objected to these recommendations. The Prime Minister accepted a proposal to allow the current committees to return next week with their own assessments of their activities. After deliberation on these reports, decisions would be made about any restructuring of the IESC.

Ministry finger-pointing over Sarafiya Bridge project

¶9. (C) Engineers from the Sarafiya Bridge work site provided an update on the issues that were delaying progress on rebuilding the bridge. A contractor tasked with removing debris has proven incapable, and representatives of the Ministry of Housing and Construction sparred with the Ministry of Industry over who was to blame. The Prime Minister said that these delays are 'embarrassing' for the government, and stated that he expected DPM Barham Salih to improve the ministry coordination needed to get the bridge up. The bridge engineers then described some positive progress at the site and stated that clearance of the rubble, an important part of the project, could be completed within 2-3 months.

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